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PORTUGAL

Preliminary unofficial returns from the Portuguese legislative assembly election yesterday showed the Socialists running somewhat behind the total needed to form a government on their own. The Communists were crowding the center-right Social Democratic Center for third place in the balloting.

With less than half of the election districts reporting, the Socialists had 34 percent of the vote, the centrist Popular Democratic Party 26 percent, the Social Democratic Center 15 percent, and the Communists slightly under 15 percent.

In very early returns—apparently mostly from rural areas—the Popular Democrats and the Social Democratic Center appeared to be running strongly enough to deny the Socialists the near 40-percent total they were seeking and to keep the Communists at their 13-percent total of last year. However, as later returns were received—mostly from the cities, where hand counting of the more numerous ballots took longer—both the Socialists and Communists were gaining momentum at the expense of the other two parties.

If this trend continues, the Communists would appear to have a good chance to take third place in the balloting, while the Socialists seem to have an outside chance of capturing near the 38 percent they received in the constituent assembly election last year. The slow pace of ballot counting makes it difficult to determine whether the Socialist surge will be enough to allow the party to attempt to form a minority government.

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LEBANON

Tensions in Beirut have noticeably decreased since President Franjiyah signed the constitutional amendment into law on Saturday, setting the stage for the election of his successor. Sporadic small arms fire and artillery duels continue to mar the cease-fire, but security has improved enough to permit the supply of flour and fuel to various parts of the city.

Several obstacles remain to choosing a new president. Lebanese political leaders will now have to decide where and when parliament will meet and who will provide security for its delegates. The speaker has called for a meeting of parliament today to fix a date for the presidential election. The reconstituted tripartite truce committee should make security easier to arrange this time.

More importantly, the Lebanese, Palestinians, and Syrians have yet to settle on a candidate to replace Franjiyah. Raymond Edde—the favorite of the Palestinians and Lebanese leftists—and Ilyas Sarkis—the choice of the Syrians and Christian Phalangists—are the front-runners, with a host of dark horses hoping to emerge as a “compromise” candidate.

The leftists under Kamal Jumblatt are certain to keep up the pressure for a speedy decision. Jumblatt welcomed the promulgation of the amendment, but was skeptical that Franjiyah would resign without further bloodshed. Jumblatt indicated that the leftists would continue to set up local administrations in areas under their military control in order to provide security and restore local services.

Phalangist leaders publicly welcomed the implementation of the constitutional amendment. They warned, however, that they now expect the Palestinians and leftists to reciprocate by abiding by the cease-fire and previous agreements regulating the activities of the fedayeen in Lebanon.

The longer it takes to settle on a successor to Franjiyah, the greater the chances that the present cooperation between the major parties will break down and heavy fighting will resume.

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ITALY

The Italian Socialist Party's directorate is meeting today to consider the Christian Democrats' plan to hold a parliamentary debate and confidence vote this week on Prime Minister Moro's minority government. Initial Socialist reaction yesterday suggests that the party will topple Moro by voting against him. This would leave President Leone little choice but to dissolve parliament and schedule an election.

The Christian Democrats settled on the confidence-vote strategy at a divisive weekend meeting of their party directorate, convened to weigh the results of party chief Zaccagnini's consultations last week with other party leaders. He was trying to gain support for an emergency formula under which the Moro government would have negotiated economic measures and a compromise on abortion with all parties except the neo-fascists.

Both the Socialists and Communists, however, presented Zaccagnini with emergency formulas of their own, which would have given the Communists a larger role than the Christian Democrats had authorized Zaccagnini to offer. Although Communist chief Berlinguer did not ask for Communist membership in the government or inclusion in its parliamentary majority, he did insist on a political agreement recognizing the Communists' "essential" and "indispensable" role in bringing Italy out of its present crisis. Berlinguer apparently suggested that he would be willing to replace the Socialists in providing parliamentary support to the Moro government until May 1977, the end of the current parliament's term.

Christian Democratic conservatives argued at the directorate meeting for Moro's immediate resignation and the substitution of a prime minister from the party's right wing to lead the Christian Democrats into an election. Zaccagnini and Moro—leaders of the party's left wing—reportedly wanted to continue searching for a way around an election.

The final decision apparently represents a compromise between the two sides. The Christian Democratic right seems likely to get the election it has sought, while the party left has a chance of continuing to head the government going into the contest, since Moro may be asked to stay on in a caretaker status if his government falls.

In any event, the Christian Democrats—expecting the Socialists to force an election by bringing Moro down—will try to use the coming parliamentary debate to blame the leftist parties for the deteriorating political situation.

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Meanwhile, controversy continues over the allegations in the Italian press last week that one of three former Christian Democratic prime ministers—Moro, President Leone, or Foreign Minister Rumor—was involved in the Lockheed payoff scandal. The parliamentary commission investigating the matter is scheduled to resume work on Wednesday, and the head of the commission said its members would come to the US in the near future—even if parliament is dissolved—to seek additional information.

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AFRICANS-ARABS

The first Afro-Arab foreign ministers' conference that ended in Dakar late last week did not produce much in the way of agreements to strengthen political and economic cooperation between members of the Organization of African Unity and the Arab League.

Few details of the four-day closed meeting are available, but differences between the African and Arab delegates apparently prevented the adoption of a final communique. The conferees papered over some of their differences by agreeing on an amended draft charter outlining a program of action for Afro-Arab cooperation.

They failed, however, to arrange an Afro-Arab summit that is necessary to ratify the charter, leaving this matter to be worked out by the secretariat of the Arab League and the OAU. Cairo had offered to host a summit this July, but it now appears that a summit will not convene before early next year.

The Africans reportedly rejected Arab efforts to give the draft charter a heavily political orientation. The compromise version is said to parallel closely one originally offered by the OAU and is concerned mainly with proposals for closer economic and technical cooperation between the OAU and the Arab League. Many African delegates reportedly consider the draft too vague. The Africans have unrealistic hopes that the charter will commit the Arab side to undertake more generous aid and investment programs in black Africa in return for stronger African support for the Arab cause in the Middle East.

The meeting apparently avoided formal discussion of current Middle East and southern Africa political issues. The Arab conferees did make a token response to a request from Mozambique for special assistance to the Machel government for its application of economic sanctions against Rhodesia. Mozambique was promised a \$6-million low-interest loan from the revolving credit fund set up by the Arabs two years ago to help African countries offset increased oil import bills.

Arab militants did not try to seize on South African Prime Minister Vorster's recent visit to Israel to drum up support for excluding Israel from the UN. The draft charter on Afro-Arab cooperation contains a routine condemnation of "Zionism" along with apartheid, imperialism, colonialism, and "all forms of racial and religious discrimination."

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BRAZIL-ANGOLA

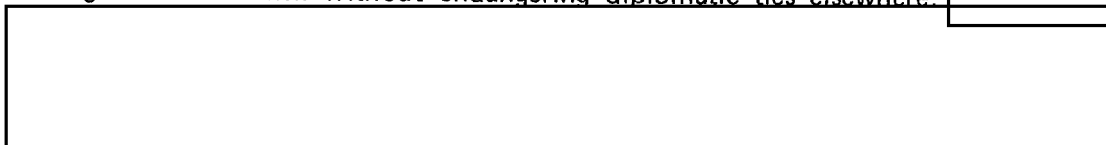
Brazil's rush to recognize the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola on the day the African territory became independent appears to be paying off in economic terms.

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The director of exports for the Brazilian Coffee Institute has confirmed that Brazil is negotiating for the purchase of up to one million bags of robusta coffee from Angola. According to Brazilian press reports, a final decision will be made next month when an Angolan trade mission visits Brazil.

The decision to recognize the Popular Movement, in spite of protests from conservatives in the military, has paid off in diplomatic, as well as economic terms. The move has helped to dispel African resentment of Brazil's past support of Portuguese colonialism without endangering diplomatic ties elsewhere.



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